NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

THE bulletin

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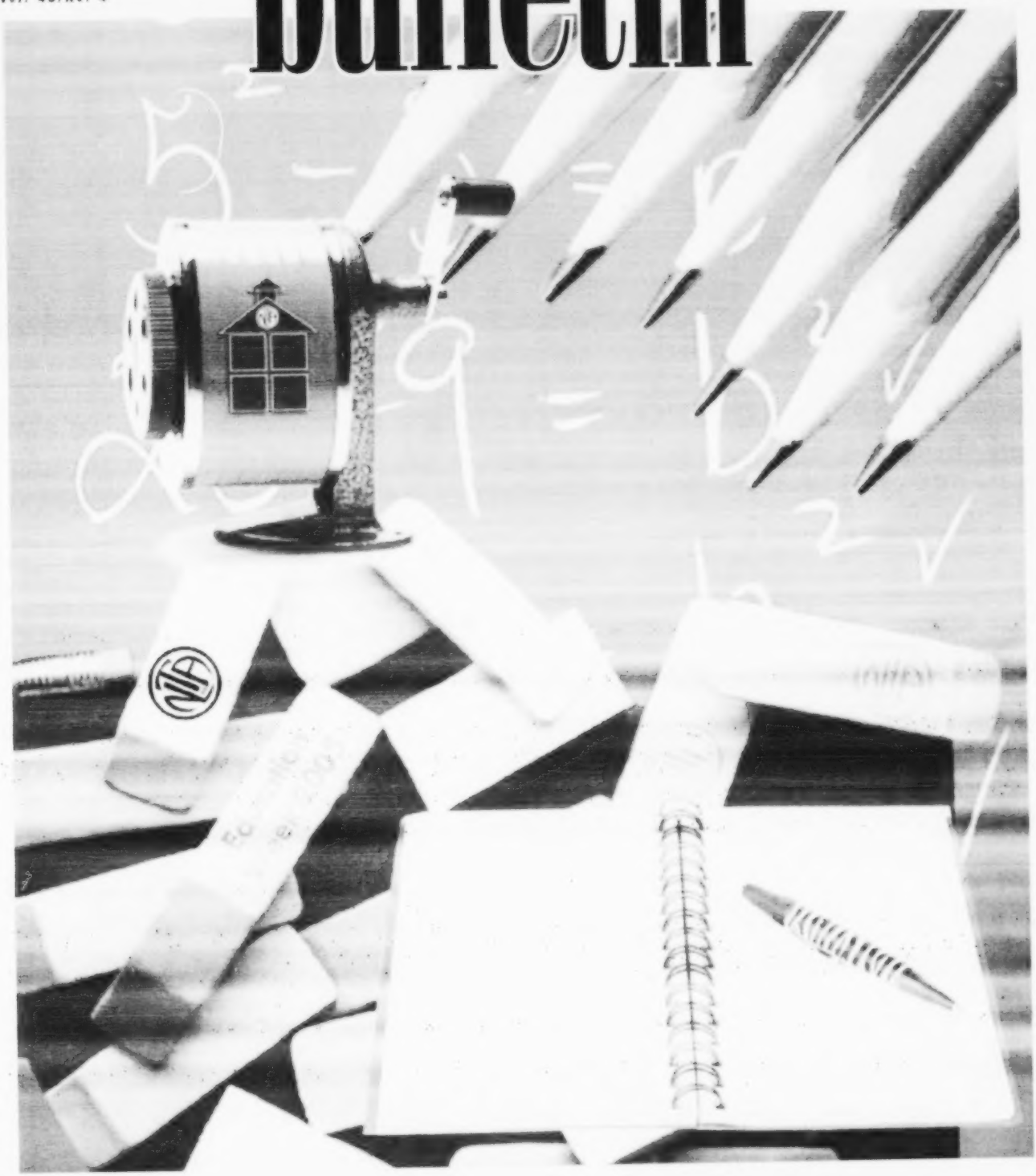

Food for Thought

by LESLEY-ANN BROWNE

The holiday rush is over, the decorations are put away for another year and the bills have started to arrive. If you are like me, you have gained five pounds (that is all I will admit in print) that is needed to keep me warm and healthy during the long cold winter. At least that is how I justified the second and third helpings of turkey, and eggnog, and cookies, and Turtles. The holidays would not be the same without a box of Turtles hidden in the back of the cupboard to be brought out when all the visitors have gone. I gave up pretending to have forgotten about them as my family caught on years ago.

Now that the presents are put away and a number of new items have arrived in our home I was rather surprised when my daughter informed me that she wanted a new pair of sneakers. She specifically said "wanted" instead of "needed". Considering the fact that the sneakers she was wearing were only a few months old I thought that perhaps they had come apart and would mean a trip back to the store to complain and get a replacement. I asked what was wrong with the ones she already had and she told me the others were better sneakers. I asked why they were better and she told me because the brand name of the others was better. I had to pursue this.

Thus a "discussion" followed about why the advertisers would make such a claim. I felt obligated as a parent, and being in the profession that I am in, to have this conversation. After much discussion I think the point was made that not all advertising is truthful and that advertisers will use the most effective means possible to try to sell their product – including stretching the truth. I assumed that my child would have been aware of this information. But how would she if I had not informed her, although I thought we had, or if it was not taught in school. The theme selected by the Provincial Committee for Education Week 2005 will hopefully provide an opportunity for students to learn about these types of issues.

This year's theme is "Food for Thought" and it encompasses thinking about what you do, making the right choices, and being informed about everything from internet use, advertising, healthy eating, the importance of physical activity and mental health – basically the importance of choosing to eat and live well. Thus the theme provides some "Food for Thought".

The items that are listed in the resource booklet will hopefully engage students in positive learning experiences that will reinforce the importance of evaluating their activities. The sub-themes of eat well, feel well, live well, lead well, and learn well also provide wonderful opportunities for students to give some food for thought to the things around them. Hopefully the theme and the resources will provide students with the information they need to make informed decisions.

And in case you were wondering… she did not get new sneakers.

Check out the online January issue of The Bulletin for "Your RRSP: A Reality Check" by Pat Hogan, and the winning entries as per the story from St. Anne's Academy on page 4.

THE bulletin

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NEWS

DUNVILLE

Contest winners learn value of health and love of family

Two students from St. Anne's Academy in Dunville have won writing awards as part of a CBC Writing Contest. The theme for the contest was "My Greatest Gift" and it was open to students in Grades 4 to 8.

Kaitlin Hickey was one of four national winners and her story was selected from thousands of entries. Kaitlin wrote about the loss of her mother from cancer and the impact this had on her life. Jake Blanche was a provincial winner and he wrote about his experiences with hockey and how he overcame his dislike for the sport.

"Both students were inspired to write their stories based on their own personal experiences," says Katherine King, Grade 8 Language Teacher at St. Anne's. "They were taught at an early age from their parents and teachers that the greatest gifts are not monetary or materialistic things, but rather more intangible ones such as the value of health and the love of family."

Each submission had to be one page, typewritten. The students in Ms. King's class had been discussing the contest and she decided to give them a Literature assignment on "My Greatest Gift".

As a result of winning a national award, Kaitlin recorded her story with CBC Radio. It will be aired on Christmas Day on the program *Winter Tales*. Both stories can be accessed on the NLTA website as a link from *The Bulletin*.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Janeway Foundation presents NLTA with Silver Bear Award

In early December, the Janeway Children's Hospital Foundation presented the NLTA with their prestigious Silver Bear Award for its contribution to the success and evolution of the Janeway Foundation.

On the occasion of the 20h Anniversary of the Foundation, an awards reception was held to thank and honour those who have made significant contributions over the years. The NLTA was presented with the award in recognition of the fundraising carried out each year during Janeway Day in the Schools. Since the program's inception in 1986, students and teachers have donated over $700,000 to the Janeway.

Arts and Heritage Career Showcase a great success

The Culture Works career showcases were well received at their four locations (Happy Valley-Goose Bay, St. John's, Gander and Corner Brook), and a total of 1,400 high school students attended the events. Students were given the opportunity to interact with people making a living in the arts and heritage sectors. The feedback received from the students and teachers was overall very positive, with many remarking that they had no idea there were so many opportunities in this sector.

"This event reveals that there is a definite gap in knowledge in regard to the cultural sector in our province," said Lucy Drown from the Cultural Human Resources Board. Students are often not receiving information about career opportunities from their parents or schools. This January a website (www.careersinculture.com) will be launched to help bridge this gap. The website will contain information on career opportunities, training and further contact information. It is also hoped to facilitate connections between youth and the cultural community through mentorships and volunteer opportunities.

For the showcase, a magazine of cultural career information was distributed to all students who attended the event. The *Culture Works* magazine contains information on careers and training, along with a number of "My Story" testimonials from people working in the sector. The magazine will be distributed to all high schools in the province. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the magazine, please contact Lucy Drown at (709) 738-0200 or chrb@nfld.net.

ALBERTA

Deafness Studies offered at University of Alberta

Children who have hearing losses need specialist intervention in order to achieve their full potential. Teachers who are trained to work with deaf and hard of hearing students are also able to use their unique skills with other special needs children.

Over the last ten years, deaf and hard of hearing children have been increasingly included in regular classrooms, but often without proper support systems and without opportunity for a specialist's assistance. This has created new challenges for teachers, who often do not recognize the true impact that a hearing loss has on the child's ability to use the English language to learn. Some provinces mandate that all deaf and hard of hearing children be served by teachers with specialized training; Alberta does not have such legislation.

Canada is now facing a shortage of teachers who have specialized training in working with deaf and hard-of-hearing children. This year, the University of Alberta has received calls from every province in Canada looking for trained teachers of the deaf to work in both classroom and consulting situations.

The Canadian Association of Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CAEDHH) offers certification for those trained to work with this population. This training is offered at the University of Alberta: a one-year course-based M.Ed. in Deafness Studies in the Department of Educational Psychology. The training includes studies in language development and reading, American sign language (and other forms of manual communication), psychology, audiology, auditory/oral rehabilitation, curriculum design, and counselling. In addition, there is a field experience component in which the students work with CAEDHH certified teachers of the deaf in a variety of settings. Field experiences are designed individually and students have been placed in educational settings worldwide.

Professionals who have undergraduate degrees in fields related to deafness are also invited to apply for a Masters Program in Deafness Studies. Programs will be set up according to the individual's needs in accordance with Graduate Study requirements.

For more information please contact Dr. Mary Ann Bibby, Director, Deafness Studies Education, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5, Tel: 403-492-3697, Fax: 403-492-1318, maryann.bibby@ualberta.ca.

CANADA

Funding opportunity to improve nutrition/physical activity levels

Do you have an innovative and creative idea that may enhance the nutrition and physical activity habits of your students? If so, the National School Health Project would like to help!

The University of New Brunswick, in conjunction with Health Canada, is offering financial support to educators across the country to improve the nutrition and physical activity levels of Canadian children.

For further information and to request an application form, visit www.unb.ca/spans/en/pilots.htm.

National welfare and work study for LGBTQ teachers

An educational research team at the University of Alberta, led by Dr. Andre P. Grace, is currently engaged in a national research project that investigates welfare and work issues for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, queer (LGBTQ) and allied teachers in Canada. This national project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The research team would like to speak with LGBTQ and allied teachers about their workplace experiences. As well, they would like to discuss their perspectives on educational initiatives in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity educational issues. Is LGBTQ inclusive educational work happening in your school or district? Are things getting better? What is happening? What needs to be done? Are law, legislation, and educational policies working for LGBTQ and allied teachers the way these protections should? How do LGBTQ teachers deal with the personal and professional at work?

Currently, the research team is hoping to interview LGBTQ and allied K-12 teachers in each of the provinces and territories across Canada. They look forward to interviewing a diverse group of LGBTQ and allied pre-service and practicing teachers.

If you would like to participate in a 30-45 minute telephone interview about your school and teaching experiences, please contact Andre P. Grace (andre.grace@ualberta.ca) or Kristopher Wells (kwells@ualberta.ca) or telephone the Agape research project office at (780) 492-0772. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured thoughout the research process.

Survey seeks views of science educators

The Co-operative Education and Workplace Learning Project at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University, is inviting teachers to participate in research aimed at co-operative education in secondary school programs.

As part of their research, they have developed an on-line survey to obtain views of science educators on what needs to be taught in Canadian science classrooms. (An equivalent survey is being given to a sample of employers in science-rich workplaces.) This survey, which is available at www.rjrgroup.net/cewl/educators/index.html, has been cleared by the General Research Ethics Board at Queen's University. The link takes you to an information and consent page, and the survey should take approximately 25 minutes to complete.

The survey will be available until March of 2005. Information collected will help the researchers better understand how Canada can ensure that it has a well-educated workforce for the knowledge economy. Information about the entire research agenda can be found at http://educ.queensu.ca/~cewl.

CHINA

Teaching opportunities in China

Since 1997, Atlantic Education International Inc. (AEI Inc.), on behalf of the New Brunswick Department of Education has been working with the Concord Colleges of Sino-Canada on various education initiatives.

Teaching opportunities exist in three schools in the cities of Shenzhen and Beijing in Kindergarten through 12, beginning Mid-August 2005 through July 2006.

AEI is looking for flexible, adventurous and vibrant teachers who are mid-career, recently retired or recent Bachelor of Education graduates. English, Mathematics and Science specialists, experienced second language teachers, and experienced administrators are also required.

Teachers, in good standing, holding a valid Canadian Provincial teaching license or those whose credentials have been recognized by a Canadian provincial Department of Education would be eligible to apply.

For more information please contact Alan Norman, General Manager, china.programs@gnb.ca, Tel: 506-372-3255; Fax: 506-856-3224.

INTERNATIONAL

Global Action Week 2005

Education International (EI) and its members will once again take an active role in the Global Action Week 2005 on the theme "Education to End Poverty".

EI, together with its partners in the Global Campaign for Education, will be celebrating the 6th Global Action Week (GAW) from April 24-30 to help millions of children around the world claim their right to education.

The Global Action Week aims at mobilizing public opinion to exert pressure on governments and intergovernmental agencies to provide free, quality "Education For All" (EFA). Global Action Week is always organized in April to recall the commitment made by 185 governments in April 2000, at the World Education Forum, to provide Education For All by the year 2015.

Among the events in 2005 will be a "Send my Friend to School" operation. Children and adult learners around the world will make life-size cutouts which will symbolize the 105 million out-of-school children and 860 million illiterate adults. The aim is to confront politicians and leaders with as many of these "Friends" as possible and ask them to sign a personal pledge to take specific action in 2005 to work towards the achievement of the EFA goal. These representations of illiterate children and adults, and the demands posted on the back of the cut-outs, will then be sent to the G8 Summit, to be held early July in Scotland.

The 2005 Global Action Week is of special importance as it coincides with the date for the achievement of the first Millennium Development Goal on gender parity in primary education. The goal will not be achieved. Therefore, some of the life-size cutouts will also be sent to the UN Millennium Development Goals Summit (New York, September 2005). EI affiliates, as well as other organizations, will be asked to wear white ribbons or bands as a symbolic action supporting the Millennium Development Goals.

To date, EI members in about 50 countries (among them Japan, Spain, the USA, India, Senegal, Argentina, Pakistan) have committed themselves to participating actively in the Global Action Week events.

EI has devoted a section of its website to GAW 2005 – www.ei-ie.org/globalactionweek/ is updated regularly to keep you abreast of every development in the campaign, and notably the section "What is your country doing".

HARRY REID, 1939 – 2004

Harry was born in Dildo, Trinity Bay, in 1939, the fifth of 11 children to Ruth and Gordon Reid. After completing his high school education he embarked on a teaching career that took him to such communities as Windsor, Gambo and King's Point. In subsequent years Harry attended MUN where he earned B.A. and B.A.(Ed.) degrees.

In 1968 Harry returned to Dildo where he spent the next and final 27 years of his career as principal and teacher at Woodland Elementary School, formerly the Salvation Army School. He retired, with pride in a job well done, in June of 1992.

Along with his busy administrative and teaching responsibilities and duties, Harry found time to channel his energy and devotion towards his community, the Scouting movement, and in particular, his church, where he was a dedicated and respected member. He acted in several capacities over the years, on the church council, most notable, 25 years as Corps Secretary.

Harry was both a gentle man and a true gentleman. As well, he was a very humble individual who showed by word and deed how one can best serve God and also how we should treat our fellow man.

By Harry's family, both immediate and extended, those he worked with, mentored, taught or associated with in any other way, he will be remembered as supportive, dedicated, encouraging, loyal, honest and a true friend indeed.

During Harry's illness, the hundreds of visits, cards and prayers were evidence of how much he was loved and respected. After his passing, the outpouring of concern for his family was again the result of how Harry lived his life and how he loved and treated his fellow man.

On October 25, 2004, after a lengthy illness, Harry passed to his eternal reward, not asking, "Why me?", but rather, "Why not me?"

We know that the huge vacuum created by this loss will not be filled because Harry was a unique person with unique qualities. However, he lives on in each of us who knew him. A memory here, a picture there, will always be those things that remind us of the great friend we all had in Harry and of the wonderful husband, father and grandfather that he was and who is now gone only from our sight.

Harry is survived by his wife and best friend of 41 years, Juanita, four daughters: Heather, Jennifer, Janet and Jillian; three granddaughters: Celeste, Claire and Rachael; five sisters and four brothers, along with a large circle of other relatives and many friends.

(Submitted by John Boone)

It's About Time

by EDWARD HANCOCK

"There is a developing body of evidence to show that… teachers' work has intensified over the past decade."

"The working time outside the classroom…the invisible work, has contributed significantly to the intensification of the job of teaching."

These are just two of the statements made by Dr. David Dibbon in "It's About Time!! – A Report on the Impact of Workload on Teachers and Students." This report of the 2003-04 study of teacher workload in this province, released by Dr. Dibbon in June 2004, has gone a long way towards identifying and quantifying the key workload issues for teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Dr. Dibbon's study, and his in-depth report, have provided a wealth of data and analysis to support what teachers and the NLTA have known from experience for years: the workload demands on teachers have far exceeded any reasonable expectation of what can be accomplished in the time available to meet those demands. Further, there are clearly identified consequences for students and their educational experiences as a result of this teacher workload intensification.

The title of the report "It's About Time!!", was certainly not accidental. Dr. Dibbon has noted that, very early in his analysis of the data from the survey, it became apparent that a lack of time was a key issue for many teachers and greatly impacted the level of satisfaction with many other aspects of their jobs. Thus, the results of the study are, to a large extent, about "time". Further, when one considers the delays in having this study completed after a clause agreeing to carry out such a study was included in the 1998 collective agreement, it is "about time" that this analysis has been carried out and is now available.

The report is organized around four major themes that emerged throughout the study as having "…contributed significantly to the intensification of work and an increase in teacher workloads. The four factors are: (1) a lack of time for such things as preparation, assessment and reporting, assigned supervision and attending meetings; (2) classes that are too large and have too many students with diverse needs; (3) the implementation of new programs without adequate resources; and (4) scheduling challenges that result in inappropriate and out-of-field teaching."

A key finding of the study is that "…the average work week for teachers in this province would be 52.32 hours." This total is made up of time within the fixed instructional day, time outside the instructional day and time on voluntary activities. The mean hours per week reported under the various types of teacher work-related activities are as follows:

Teacher non-voluntary work	Mean (hrs per week)
Fixed instructional day	
• Instructional time	25.0 hrs
• Mandatory time before & after school	2.50 hrs
Outside the instructional day	
• Assigned supervision time	1.35 hrs
• Preparation time	9.25 hrs
• Meetings	2.30 hrs
• Assessment time	2.93 hrs
• Testing/Reporting time	2.67 hrs
• Time meeting with parents	0.67 hrs
Sub-Total	**46.67hrs**
• Voluntary activities	5.65 hrs
Total	**52.32 hrs**

Source: "It's About Time!! – A Report on the Impact of Workload on Teachers and Students" Table 4, Page 12

(This particular study concerned itself only with teachers' non-voluntary work. In order to make comparisons with similar studies across the country, the researcher used the results of a similar study carried out in PEI in 2002 to estimate the time spent on voluntary activities.)

It is evident from the previous table that the fixed instructional day constitutes only slightly more than one-half of the average work week for teachers. The remainder of the time is what Dr. Dibbon refers to as the "invisible work" of teachers; that which takes place outside the regular hours of classroom instruction and thus is, for the most part, invisible to students, parents and the public at large.

When examining the number of hours in the average teacher work week, there is quite a consistency in the data reported from other studies of teacher workload. Dr. Dibbon's report analyzes trends in other Canadian jurisdictions and summarizes the results as follows:

Teachers Weekly Hours of Work by Province

Province	Year	Average Teacher Work Week
Newfoundland and Labrador	2004	52.32 hours
Prince Edward Island	2002	48-52 hours
British Columbia	2001	53.1 hours
Nova Scotia	2000	52.5 hours
New Brunswick	2000	51.0 hours
Alberta	1999	52.9 hours
Saskatchewan	1995	47.0 hours

Source: "It's About Time!" – A Report on the Impact of Workload on Teachers and Students. Appendix 2, Page 40

It is worthwhile to remind ourselves of the genesis of this study. The Provincial Collective Agreement accepted in June 1998 contained an MOU Re Workload whereby government, the NLSBA and NLTA agreed to conduct such a study, to participate jointly in the design and conduct of the study and, where the parties concurred on the terms of reference of the study, they were to share equally in the cost. A committee established under this MOU was unable to produce a workload study before that agreement expired, so the same clause appeared as Schedule M in the 2001-04 collective agreement. Although progress was made towards accepting a proposal for the study and the development of a research plan and survey instrument, government and the NLSBA then decided not to participate in the study unless there were further modifications to the instrument and a narrowing in the scope of the study. At that point, the NLTA commissioned the completion of the work with no change in the survey instrument nor the research methodology which had previously been submitted by Dr. Dibbon.

The MOU was placed in the 1998 collective agreement because, during the 1996-98 contract negotiations, it became obvious that there was a severe lack of data available on many aspects of teacher workload in this province, and teacher workload was a major issue in that and the subsequent round of bargaining. We now have that data and it should put to rest once and for all the myth of the 25 hour teachers' work week. As Dr. Dibbon notes, "If we compare the total hours of work per year for the average teacher (2,042 hrs.) to the number used by Treasury Board to calculate annual salaries for public sector works (1,820 hrs.) then it becomes obvious that the average teacher works the equivalent of fifty-two (52), 39.5 hour weeks as compared to the public service where all employees work a standard 35 hours per week, based on a 52 week year."

This report also makes note of how students are affected by the impact of some of the key teacher workload issues. For example:

- "Teachers expressed concern that higher levels of frustration and stress due to a lack of assigned time to prepare classes can negatively impact on their interaction with students."
- "The lack of preparation time can also result in classes that are not planned/prepared as well as they could be."
- "When a teacher does not have time to properly assess student work in a timely fashion, and has little time to prepare tutorial classes, remedial work for students who need extra help is often compromised."
- "Teachers say they don't have time to prepare their classrooms the way they want them and they sometimes have to compromise on how they plan a lesson. This might mean the students have to tolerate a more traditional instructional approach rather than a more activity-oriented approach."
- "Teachers also noted, on occasions, especially around reporting time, it takes them longer to correct student work and consequently longer to provide them with feedback."

The report of the study also includes specific data on a number of workload issues, as well as a number of conclusions and recommendations. These will be explored in later articles in *The Bulletin*. Your Association will continue to pursue with the Department of Education and with government the issues identified in this study and the impact of those issues on teachers and students. We will continue to pursue solutions. The workload study has given us the data we need to continue our attempts on teachers' behalf to have these matters recognized and addressed.

Edward Hancock is Executive Director of the NLTA.

Issues Related to School Board Restructuring

by Lloyd Hobbs

"It is your Association's desire to work with the new boards during the implementation stage. However, we cannot allow the rights of our members to be violated during this period."

With the restructuring of school boards which occurred in September 2004, there have arisen a number of issues that are new to the daily lives of teachers. Your Association is attempting to address and resolve these on your behalf.

Because of the vast size of the new school districts, it has become much more complex and demanding to coordinate district-wide meetings and inservice sessions. One of the first difficulties to surface has centered around the timing of such activities. The travel time, which is necessary in some instances to be in attendance at such activities is intruding upon a teacher's legitimate days off or away from work. Clause 29.05 of the Provincial Collective Agreement states: *No teacher shall be required to be present for school duties on Saturday or Sunday.*

The NLTA views travel on board related commitments to be school duties, and therefore it is your Association's position that you cannot be required to travel on the weekend in order to be in the location of the board sponsored event on Monday morning. Reasonable time in the work week must be provided.

Another issue centers around the travel expenses created by our members having to travel such long distances and often having to overnight away from home. Clause 25.01 (1) of the Agreement states: *Subject to Clause 25.01 (b) (i) and 25.04 (a) and (b), where in the course of duty a teacher is required to travel on business for the School Board, the teacher shall be reimbursed for meals, lodging and travel at the prevailing rate for Government employees.*

Some of our members have questioned their school board's reimbursement policy and in turn we have attempted to clarify the prevailing rate for government employees. Some boards have stated their intent to offer reimbursement at a lower rate – shared accommodations being one example – but would honor the prevailing government rate for any employee who objected to the board's compensation plan.

Since these are global issues for all newly restructured boards, the NLTA has filed a policy grievance with the NLSBA. We hope to be able to resolve the matter in the near future and you will be informed of the outcome.

Yet another area of concern has come about as a result of new boards attempting to create uniform expectations for all its teaching staff. Itinerant teachers are one group in particular experiencing difficulties in certain regions. In some cases, itinerants have new responsibilities for much larger geographic areas. There are issues around expectations of when such teachers are to be in the schools they service, what expenses will be covered while conducting business on behalf of the board, the degree of professional autonomy and flexibility given to teachers and similar types of issues.

It is your Association's desire to work with the new boards during the implementation stage. However, we cannot allow the rights of our members to be violated during this period. Whether people feel the length of the workday for teachers has been extended or whether they feel their compensation has been reduced, teachers have every right to discuss these issues with their employer. If such discussions do not provide a remedy to the problem, the grievance process as outlined in Article 31 of the Collective Agreement can be utilized by any member and the Administrative Staff of the Benefits and Economic Services division of the NLTA will provide assistance and direction.

Finally, the new school year has brought problems from some schools relating to the amount of discretionary leave available at the school or individual teacher level. Discussions with Department of Education officials indicate that out of a total budget for all leaves, – discretionary and non-discretionary – the budgetary cutbacks of last spring resulted in a reduction of one half a million dollars. From NLTA's understanding of the substitute teacher budget, the reduction of substitute teaching days would have amounted to approximately 1,500 days or a reduction of about 2.3%. However, the impact on discretionary leaves is being reported by schools to be much greater than this figure. It would appear that boards are placing the bulk of their substitute budgets into non-discretionary leaves such as sick leave, and compassionate leave, resulting in little opportunity for teachers to access any other leaves, including family leave, professional leave and other forms of paid leave.

We have expressed the Association's concern to the highest level of the Department of Education and will be approaching individual school boards to seek ways to create greater flexibility in the allocation of substitute days to better address the concerns and needs of our members. It is our hope that some relief will be forth coming.

Government stated during the initial announcements regarding this round of restructuring of education that this was administrative reform, not reform at the classroom level. It was your Association's position at that time that this round of school district consolidation would have far-reaching impacts on the classroom and on teachers. The latter has proven to be the case. There have been many impacts on our teachers both in and out of the classroom. We will continue to address these concerns and will strive to improve working conditions for teachers. If you have issues which require assistance from your Association, you are encouraged to contact an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA by calling 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599.

Lloyd Hobbs is the Assistant Executive Director of the NLTA.

Integration of Your TPP with CPP

by DON ASH

In 1998, the Teacher's Pension Plan (TPP) became integrated with the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) as a result of collective agreement negotiations. However, the concept of integration is still not well understood by some of our active and retired teachers. This article is intended to explain and clarify issues surrounding integration of TPP with CPP.

The pensions of teachers who retired prior to September of 1998 are not integrated with Canada Pension. Their Canada Pension is stacked on top of their teacher's pension. Teachers who retire after August 31, 1998 will experience a reduction in their teacher's pension in the month following their 65th birthday. The amount of this reduction is calculated at the time of retirement from teaching and does not change, regardless of inflation. The dollar amount of the reduction is based on the following formula:

> [3 year average of the yearly maximum pensionable earnings (YMPE)] x [number of years of pensionable service (maximum 35)] x [integration factor of .006]

Using an example of a teacher with 33.8 years of pensionable service, and using the 3 year average YMPE as of June 2004, the annual amount of reduction of the teacher's pension beginning the month following the 65th birthday will be:

$39,467 x 33.8 x .006 = $8,051

In other words, a teacher who retired in June 2004 will have his/her teacher's pension reduced by $8,051 annually beginning at age 65 regardless of when the teacher takes Canada Pension. The following illustrates a teacher's income source from pension, if a teacher elects to take Canada Pension at age 60.

Age	Income
Retirement to age 60	TPP
Age 60 to age 65	TPP + CPP (indexed)
Age 65 to death	[TPP - integration (indexed)] + CPP (indexed) + Old Age Security (OAS)

This table shows that a teacher's total pension income will rise and fall when they hit age 60 and age 65. Quite likely, a teacher's total pension income from all sources will be lower after age 65 than it was before age 65. Teachers should budget and plan accordingly. The actual amount of change in income is based on individual circumstances, which include the amount of integration offset, the amount of Canada Pension being received, and the amount of OAS.

The Pensions Division at the Provincial Department of Finance calls the integration reduction amount a bridge benefit. As stated, the amount of reduction is calculated at the point of retirement. However, our TPP contains a provision called a "bridge benefit" that allows the pension plan to pay the reduction amount (bridge) until the 65th birthday. When you retire, Pensions Division will send you a letter indicating the amount of your bridge benefit. This is the amount you will lose from your teacher's pension at age 65. A retired teacher unaware of his/her bridge benefit (reduction amount) should contact Pensions Division at 709-729-3932.

If a teacher elects to receive Canada Pension at age 60 (the age most Canadians elect) then the amount of Canada Pension received will be based on his/her contribution history from age 18 (or 1966, if later) until age 60. In order to receive the maximum Canada Pension, a person must make the maximum

CPP contributions each year of their contribution history. CPP allow a person to "drop out" 15% of their contribution period for low or no income earning years, and periods of absence from the work force for child-rearing (children under age 7) purposes. However, if a person retired from teaching at age 54 or earlier and made no further CPP contributions, that person is unlikely to receive the maximum CPP available at age 60. An estimate of your CPP amount can be obtained by calling 1-800 277-9914.

"Because Newfoundland and Labrador teachers often retire at a young age, they may not recieve the maximum CPP available at age 60 unless they work and contribute to CPP after retirement from teaching."

While all other federal and provincial public service pension plans have been integrated for decades, integration with CPP is a relatively new event for Newfoundland and Labrador teachers, and involves a lowering of teacher pension income at age 65. Because Newfoundland and Labrador teachers often retire at a young age, they may not receive the maximum CPP available at age 60 unless they work and contribute to CPP after retirement from teaching. It is important that teachers consider these factors in their financial and retirement planning.

Any questions or concerns can be directed to **Pensions Division at the Department of Finance**, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, or an administrative officer at NLTA.

Don Ash is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

TAG! You're It!

by BEVERLEY PARK

Does anyone play TAG any more? Or have computer games and internet surfing replaced this childhood activity? I still remember it – running around the open space of the schoolyard, or the hay garden in summer, trying to catch up with and touch someone. Once "tagged" that person had to take the lead and try to do the same – to touch others.

Who'd have thought that at my age I'd still be involved with TAG? TAG is an acronym for "Teachers' Actions for Girls", a project of the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU), supported by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, Social and Educational Development (SODEP) Program. Like the game, it is a project through which we attempt to "touch" participants and energize them to take the lead and follow through by continuing the activity and reaching out to yet others. Unlike the game, it is not child's play.

The SODEP "TAG" team: Paulette Moore, Beverley Park, and Carolyn Francis.

The TAG project, though only 18 months old, has been an unqualified success and promises to vastly improve the prospects for girls and their access to education in Uganda. It began in May 2003 when the SODEP team facilitated a meeting with UNATU secretariat and officials of the various non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations working in Uganda, to develop a strategy to deal with the challenges faced by girls. One of the activities during that session was to draw up a list of those challenges. The resulting document is one that I still refer back to for what I call my "reality check". It isn't because my memory is so feeble that I cannot recall it, but because I find some of the issues so disturbing that, of necessity, I push them to the back of my mind. They include a real fear of AIDS and HIV from defilement en route to and from school, and even at school (by fellow students, by workers affiliated with the school, and by teachers!); forced early marriage – girls as young as 13 are married off by their parents so that they no longer have to support them; cruel and inhumane discipline practices which put girls at even greater risk of abuse; forced child-labour, including heavy field work, begging and prostitution, to name a few. Like Newfoundland and Labrador, Uganda is a story-telling culture and for each item on the list there were a dozen or more stories… most of them first hand accounts of a sister or a cousin or a niece or of the person speaking, to provide evidence of the need for help. To be honest, I personally felt a sense of paralysis at the depth and breadth of the problem. Not so our colleagues from Uganda – rather than being paralyzed, they were mobilized.

It was abundantly clear that teachers were a part of the problem. UNATU, the teachers' union, was to take the lead with its own members in making them part of the solution. The task seemed daunting, but how does one start a journey of a thousand miles? With just one step.

The first step for UNATU was to develop a workshop to sensitize and mobilize teachers to take action in support of girls: TAG! It has now been offered in three regions, with a strategy to take it to the rest of the country. In November 2004 the SODEP team had the opportunity and privilege of participating in the evaluation of the first two sessions, and to go to the West Nile region, Arua District, for the third TAG workshop. What we saw and heard left us shocked but hopeful; humbled and proud.

If these sound like contradictory sentiments, the whole experience is one of contrasts and apparent contradictions. There is both the adventure and privilege of seeing a beautiful country that most could only dream of visiting, contrasted with the stark conditions and real danger of traveling in a place where rebels are active and where teachers are targets. There is the pain of the heart-wrenching stories of the AIDS orphans and

the victims and refugees of war contrasted with the momentum stirred up by the desire and commitment of the teacher participants as they develop their action plans. The extreme heat and humidity of the equatorial climate is contrasted with the chilling realities of the working, the living, the teaching and the learning conditions of students and teachers in Uganda.

Teachers registering for TAG.

In Arua a woman teacher, Ogono, arrived to register at the TAG workshop carrying her young child on her back. The child's name was Hope. I would like to believe that when that child is ready for school, in five years time, she will not have to fear for her physical or emotional safety and that those teachers we have touched - and who we hope will touch others – will be her protectors and supporters. Hope became a symbol for me, for all of us at that last workshop... and perhaps TAG, for her, will be child's play – as it should be!

Ogono and Hope.

The SODEP team is Paulette Moore a retired staff officer of the NBTA; Carolyn Francis, retired teacher of the PEITF; and myself, as team leader.

Beverley Park is an Administrative Officer in the Professional Development Division of the NLTA.

The Quest to Manage Stress

by MARIE WALL

The quest to manage stress is a lifelong task. It ebbs and flows with the events and experiences in our lives. Learning to develop a healthy perception of stress and to confront it in a healthy manner are skills you can learn and thus become stronger as a person and in your ability to handle daily tasks. Don Powell of the American Institute for Preventative Medicine says stress management is multi-dimensioned. It centers around four tasks: good communication skills; time management; healthy perspective; and relaxation. Incorporating these tasks on a daily basis will be beneficial in lowering our stress and essential when high emotional experiences and demands trigger intense stress.

Stress is our response to experiences and thoughts and causes us to react and release adrenalin. This occurs for both positive and negative experiences. It triggers our innate drive to action – our "fight or flight response". Stress heightens our awareness of external and integral cues and drives us to respond appropriately to the events and thoughts at hand. Stress, as a positive thing, is a natural response that calls us to act. But we cannot live in a constant state of stress. Constant stress is destructive, because we cannot differentiate between the new event and the constant stress. A stress response is for emergency situations. When everything is an emergency, it is impossible for our innate wisdom to help us deal with the situation at hand – the daily tasks in our work and home life that make demands but are not emergencies. When we use our skills and take them in stride, we create the space we need to live a more peaceful life.

It is important for us to remember that stressful experiences occur throughout every stage of our lives. No one is exempt from experiencing stress. What differs for people is how we relate to stressful events when they occur and how we manage our daily life and the tasks at hand.

We need to develop skills that will assist us in dealing with the constant demands we face. Some of us may have confidence in certain areas but may need to develop skills in other areas. The more skills we have, the more confidence we have in dealing with the everyday tasks at work and home, leaving time and energy for the real emergencies that arise and require our full attention.

These skills build confidence and comfort, enabling us to manage events as they arise, to complete tasks that require our attention and to discharge accumulated stress. The benefits are many for our families, our students and ourselves – we can enjoy the interactions with others, take time to enjoy life, sleep better and feel better. Is it worth learning these skills? It's only worth it if you want to be more confident and more comfortable in your life.

Our relationships with others and how we care for ourselves influence stress reduction. Positive outcomes in our personal interactions, whether at work or home, leave us feeling positive and confident.

Communication Skills

Many people think that the skill of communicating well is a natural, innate gift. In reality, communication is a skill that is a learned behaviour and it is never too late to learn. Two main components of communication are effective listening and assertiveness. Effective listening is more than hearing. It requires our full attention and receptiveness to content and feeling, which in turn leads us to interpretation, evaluation and response.

Listening is not effective when we block the message. We do this when we feel protective and defensive. The root of self-protection is fear and defensiveness being anchored in our own position. Both leave us closed to others' perspectives and to potential positive outcomes. Dynamics which block effective listening include rehearsing our response, jumping to conclusions, daydreaming, attacking the speaker or blaming another. When we engage in tasks other than listening, we are not open to receiving the full message. In this way we subvert effective communication.

Listening is essential in understanding what someone else is trying to say. Healthy assertiveness is a way to express yourself that is respectful, that does not harm another person or minimize what we want to say. Assertiveness is a direct, honest and appropriate expression of the situation, our feelings, and communicates what we need.

Few of us know innately how to express ourselves assertively. Most of us learned to either ignore our own experience, which is passive, or to get our way at another's expense, which is aggressive. Assertive interactions result in a win-win outcome. It may be uncomfortable to us initially because it is unfamiliar, but in the long term it builds confidence and lowers stress.

Time Management

Time is a valuable asset. When we are continually pressed for time it becomes a source of stress. Effective use of time produces positive results, increased good feelings, and room for other activities such as personal and family time. Time can be, or is, a source of stress for teachers.

Time management stressors include missing deadlines, constantly feeling rushed, indecision, procrastination, and not having enough time to do the things you would like. To consider the effectiveness of your own time management, ask yourself this question: "Is time working for you or against you?" Good time management enhances one's confidence and others' confidence in you.

Some things that we can do to positively impact effective use of time are:

- Make a set time to get a task completed, for example daily class preparation. Do it at the same time each day and make it manageable.
- Avoid interruptions. When we decide to work instead of socializing we complete our tasks more efficiently. Closing our door and letting others know we are not available are ways to take care of time.
- Learning to say "no" to others and ourselves helps in managing time. Decide where our priorities lie and say "no" to unwanted distractions.

It is important to separate what is activity, busy work that does not get results, and productivity, which leaves us with the feeling of accomplishment. Making a "To Do" list and completing given tasks shows us clearly when we are productive, giving us the feedback and satisfaction that we need.

In lowering stress, effectively managing time can enhance positive feelings and free us to do things that are important. Take time to check in and ask, "What is the best use of my time right now?" This is one way to assess what is needed immediately. Once it is finished you will feel more positive.

Healthy Perspective

Most of us are not used to thinking positively about ourselves, a courtesy we offer readily to our students. We can more easily share appreciation to another person, but seldom give that same compassion and gentleness to ourselves. Developing a healthy perspective is another essential element to lowering stress in our lives.

Learning to be gentle with ourselves involves letting go of self-criticism and becoming more honest with ourselves. When we do something well, we should acknowledge it, even share it with a friend. When something does not go well, we need to accept it and know we are okay. This can then become an opportunity for learning rather than self-disparagement.

Developing a more neutral thought pattern is a challenge, but it is one that puts things in clearer perspective. Thus, clarity allows us to move through tasks without the added pressure of self-criticism.

Relaxation

In handling stress, relaxation is our time for rejuvenation. Taking time out is an investment in ourselves and in what is important to us. Relaxation can prevent stress from occurring or release stress that has been built up. There are lots of ways to use relaxation time and many of us do it naturally. Just sitting back for 10 minutes or going for a short walk can be a natural way to relax. For others, taking time out may be a new experience. For more specific techniques for relaxation, refer to my article in the November 2004 issue of *The Bulletin* entitled "Mental Fitness in the Game of Life."

Stress is a constant presence in our lives. It comes in waves. It can be a positive motivator to move us into action. It can also be destructive if it overwhelms us. Learning effective communication and time management skills build our confidence and lower personal stress levels. Healthy perspectives and attitudes help us be clear in dealing with situations, and taking time to relax allows us to rejuvenate.

Marie Wall is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for teachers. For confidential assistance contact Marie Wall (ext. 265) or Claudette Coombs (ext. 265).

Teaching Students Academic Integrity

The Establishment of a School Honour Code

by IAN DAVIDSON

"Our teacher was really nice but her classroom was large and she did not monitor the room very well. During tests students would have answers written on their hands, sheets of paper between their legs, and signals created to flash multiple-choice answers to each other. After the first test, when I got a D and everyone else got an A, I got smart too. I began making my own cheat sheets like everyone else. It was so easy to get away with that it was stupid not to cheat." Situations such as this and the development of lackadaisical attitudes toward cheating are becoming increasingly common in classrooms all over the world. The practice of cheating is not a new phenomenon, but it is a growing one and all stakeholders in the education of children need to develop strategies to deal with this issue. Educational institutions that fail to deal with the problem of academic dishonesty are, in effect, contributing to the problem and teaching students that cheating is no "big deal".

The Sordid History of Cheating

Webster's dictionary defines cheating as gaining an unfair advantage, usually in one's own interest, and often at the expense of others. For the context of this article, cheating will refer to misrepresenting academic work as one's own work or gaining an unfair advantage over classmates through the misuse of technology or available resources. Over the years many educators have seen student cheating evolve from very basic levels to our current state of technological advancement. Concealed crib sheets, writing on various body parts and copying word-for-word from reference books are all common forms of cheating used by students to gain an advantage on an exam or take-home assignment. With the advent of the personal computer and the Internet however, student cheating has reached new levels. Students frequently cut and paste information from a myriad of websites to complete assignments or simply buy their papers on-line. "Paper Mills" are websites that sell papers for a nominal fee on a wide range of topics allowing students to avoid writing altogether. A simple Google search for "Term Papers" turned up dozens of results…how is that for a quick paper? Unfortunately, the shame attached to cheating also appears to have diminished over the years. The need has never been more pressing for all stakeholders in the education of children to work together to ensure that students understand what constitutes cheating and are presented with consequences severe enough to act as a deterrent.

Why Students Cheat

Historically, children begin cheating in middle school. Ironically, this is around the same time that expectations are increasing with testing more prevalent and homework more demanding. Should we be surprised that children look for ways to cut academic corners? Not really. A natural human reaction is to seek out ways to make things easier, but in this case hard work, not cheating, is the answer. The modern student also faces unprecedented pressure to achieve academic excellence. The pursuit of scholarships, the requirements for entrance to post-secondary institutions, and peer and parental pressure all contribute to student cheating. When keeping up their grades becomes difficult, students often turn to cheating. To compound the problem, students often do not think cheating is an issue because they are not hurting anyone. Sadly, it is precisely this attitude that has been responsible for the continued prevalence of cheating.

What Can We Do

In 2004-05, Clarenville High School implemented an Honour Code for our entire student body. The faculty introduced the concept in the previous school year and a clear understanding of what our

academic expectations were for students slowly spread throughout the school. The Honour Code meticulously explained why we were stressing the concept of "academic integrity" to our students and clearly laid out the consequences for cheating: an in-school suspension, parent notification, zero on the assignment/test and a letter in their permanent student file. Ignoring the problem any longer was not an option at Clarenville High School.

In addition to the efforts made at school, Newman (2004) argues that parents also have a responsibility to help their children understand that cheating is not an acceptable option. In her article "Homework Help", she states that the starting point is to simply have a discussion with children about cheating and plagiarism to see if they understand what is expected of them. The next step, especially in the younger grades, is to let the children do their own homework. A lot of well-intentioned parents often end up "helping" their children more than is necessary, negatively affecting teacher evaluation of the child's developing abilities. With each subsequent grade, children are often faced with increased pressure to score high marks in school. The temptation to cheat increases when students feel that they must keep up their grades to meet parental and peer expectations. The most crucial thing parents can do to help is to foster a sense of pride and integrity in their children based on the genuine academic success they experience. If children can feel good about getting a "B+" without cheating they will be a lot more successful in the long run when compared with peers who cheat and receive more prestigious grades.

Research is suggesting that plagiarism is growing and that more than half of university and high school students will at some time commit plagiarism. As an educational institution, Clarenville High decided to stand up for something we believed in – our students and their moral development as future leaders of society. Will our road be a tough one? Certainly, but the end product will be students of high moral fibre who will have the confidence to tackle any academic challenges that the future may hold for them.

Ian Davidson is Assistant Principal at Clarenville High School in Clarenville, NL.

The Ultimate Challenge

Simulating a Hearing Loss

by COLLEEN J. WALSH

In the past ten years, as an Itinerant Teacher for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, I had never been challenged by a student to the extent I was this past fall. During a session with a student, we had a discussion about the reality of living with a severe, profound hearing loss since birth. It was not pretty, but it is their reality. During these conversations, I am the student. I will not ever truly understand the impact that a hearing loss can have on one's life. I empathize, as I am sure every teacher does when they have a student with a hearing loss in their classroom. I can only advocate what I learn, therefore, I undertook "the ultimate challenge" of my career.

My student challenged me to wear earplugs for a month. I agreed thinking this would be no problem for me. Little did I know what I was about to face. I was in for a rude awakening.

On Monday, November 22, 2004, I began this project by placing a set of earplugs in my ears to simulate a mild (40 decibel) conductive hearing loss. This hearing loss would **not** simulate what a student with a sensorineural hearing loss experiences. To record the experience I kept a journal to write my feelings and experiences along with the differences in what I was able and not able to hear. Also, I allowed every student I saw to write in it. I would like to share what we found with you.

Since I have normal hearing I knew what sounds I would miss.

*"**I could not hear the indicator in the vehicle... but I** could hear it click off. I cannot hear the computer keys click when I type on the keyboard. I had to turn up the volume on the phone to hear the dial-tone and message that was left for me...I cannot hear the computer mouse click when I press it. I could not hear a coworker say good morning from 6 feet away. This is a quiet world. I can hear voices from down the corridor but I cannot make out what they are saying."*

I began my day in amazement of the sounds I take for granted. The audibility of the voices I heard in the hallway versus exactly what was said is a primary example of one of the daily experiences that my students struggle with regularly. When I explain this difference in what a person with normal hearing experiences versus one with a hearing loss experiences, it seems to go in one ear and out the other, pardon the pun. If we consider the high frequency sounds – s, t, d, f, and th – for a moment, and reflect on the number of words in which we find them, then it has far-reaching implications for language and vocabulary development. These are the key areas Itinerant Teachers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing work on with their students. We have not even considered the implications for communicating with people or the misunderstandings that can occur if the message is not heard correctly. One student on my caseload has explained that his inability to follow which number the class is correcting (b, c, or d, m or n) or hear what numbers to do for homework results in him completing the wrong assignment and becoming frustrated or confused. Writing the numbers for assignments on the board helps immensely. Also, using an overhead so that answers can be seen and so that the teacher is facing the student for lip-reading purposes is beneficial.

Some of my students wrote the following observations on day one of my challenge.

"I notice Mrs. Colleen is talking a bit slower and she says "What?" more... Mrs. Colleen speaks louder... she concentrates more! .... When listening to the P.A. system; she misses some words."

"Mrs. Colleen... talks louder and slower.... she did not hear Mr---- talking but read his lips... She looks at your face more often, and it takes a bit longer for her to respond to a question."

Very good comments and observations indeed! Lip-reading helps with what is being said but only 25% of English speech sounds can be seen on the lips as is stated in the journal *Odyssey* published by the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, Winter 2003, in the article "Navigating the Hearing Classroom with a Hearing Loss", pages 10-13. "Lip-reading requires constant focus and is quite tiring and stressful. By the end of the day, students who lip-read are exhausted." I was about to discover this.

I wrote: *"I have been having a lot of trouble hearing… I move closer to people when they are speaking and concentrate more on their face for lip-reading… I cannot hear what is said when people's backs are turned.*

I do not know if I can last a full month!

One positive thing is when I tell people what I am doing… they respond to me with a better idea of where I am coming from. Self-advocacy is key to my feeling better about myself. I was not having to ask to repeat again and again."

The most difficult situation I faced on my first day occurred after school during an ISSP meeting. There were five people in the meeting including the student that challenged me. At one point, there were two discussions happening, one between the student and principal, and one between a teacher and myself. I had an extremely difficult time concentrating on what the teacher was saying while trying to filter out the other conversation. Another thing I noticed was my head movement as I was trying to follow who was speaking and what they were saying. My student wrote in the journal after the meeting.

"Colleen seems to look at people more carefully… she tells me she got a headache. At times I wonder if she pretended or assumed she heard something and agrees without knowing exactly what's going on. Though it may seem so at one point in time, when I said something to her and she nods her head, whatever I said wasn't a question. Colleen seems a little stressed because she is trying to keep up with her everyday activity… she looks tired trying to keep up."

By the time I got home on the first day I was exhausted and contrary. Out came the earplugs. I had enough!

Just to return to the meeting momentarily, once concluded, the principal asked me why I was looking at him differently. I explained that I was looking at him closely so I could follow what he was saying. I wonder how students with a hearing loss are looked upon by their classmates? Perception is individual. My student was viewed as stupid by a classmate who sat next to her in Grade 6 when she answered a question that the teacher had asked the class. The answer was correct but it was the answer to another question. What she heard or thought she heard (audibility versus intelligibility) was different from the question that the teacher asked. How do students with a hearing loss view themselves if this happens on a daily basis? The impact on self-esteem and self-confidence is significant. Thus, another aspect of the work we do as Itinerant Teachers is counseling and teaching self-advocacy skills as well as assertiveness skills. It is crucial then for these students to meet

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each other so they do not feel they are the only ones going through this experience. Normalization is a key.

On the second day of the challenge, I came in to work wearing my glasses as opposed to wearing contact lenses because my eyes were sore from concentrating. Our eyes have six muscles each while our ears have none. Needless to say, for hard of hearing individuals, listening is extremely hard work! Besides trying to figure out what is being said, you are constantly trying to fill in the gaps! Being an adult with normal hearing, it would be easier to fill-in-the-gaps than if I were a student with a hearing loss who was constantly trying to figure out what was going on, let alone trying to fill-in-the-blanks! I knew all of this. From my years' experience, the epiphany was huge!! The realization of how huge was devastating yet empowering because I had a glimpse of the experience. By day's end, I was in bed by 8:30 p.m. because I was so exhausted. I knew there was no way I was going to last the entire month. By now, I had only hoped to last this week.

On day three I was told that my voice was louder, not only by some of my students but also by some teachers. I could not determine how loud my voice was. What was more interesting, however, was how I felt.

"I found that it didn't really matter to me what I was missing… I was becoming not as involved in what I missed around me. It is definitely a struggle for me. I cannot begin to imagine the difficulty with which my students go through on a daily basis. I have a solid language base and experiences. I can substantially fill-in-gaps if I miss a word or two in a conversation… it must be a monumental task just to cope, let alone fill-in-the-gaps… I took out my earplugs around 7:30 p.m. My ears were incredibly itchy. I rubbed and rubbed until at last they felt better. I was so glad to have them out. I wonder if that is the way students feel about taking out their hearing aids."

Hearing aids do **not** correct a hearing loss but simply amplify what is heard by the person with a hearing loss. It is a piece of technology that does not correct the damage within the cochlea. People who use personal hearing aids still have trouble discriminating between certain sounds. Add to that background noise, the experience becomes more difficult. Students can wear a personal FM system coupled to their hearing aids to use in the classroom to help alleviate the background noise and to hear their teacher's voice better.

"It is truly amazing how quiet this world is with the earplugs in. I cannot believe how much I miss about the environment like if someone is following me or which way did the person go? I can hear someone walking but when I turned around they were not behind me. What are the safety issues?

Presently… I can hear voices down the hall, a man's voice and a woman's voice. I cannot make out what they say…

When I am talking with someone, I have to move closer to them and focus more on their faces. People are telling me that it takes me longer to respond to their questions or comments… because I am busily processing the information I heard, trying to fill-in-the-gaps, and think of a response. This is exactly what all of my students do. They need a longer period of time to process what was said…a longer wait time for their responses especially if clarification is needed or new vocabulary words are used (why I use synonyms so much and why we teach synonyms so much). …I know all of this but to experience it over a length of time, truly is an eye-opening experience! …I truly admire all of my students for their commitment to learning and focusing so much on what is being communicated to them. It is always such a concerted effort to listen. They are the best listeners I know."

Incidental learning. Think about it for a moment. What do you hear around you? What conversations do you overhear? How much do you learn from your environment? As educators, we must not take anything for granted for we do not know where the gaps are when working with students with hearing loss. Think about how much has been missed since birth and over time. Yes, it is huge. I suggest to explain, repeat, rephrase and say it again, if needed. Think about each lesson and how the student will receive the information. How can we optimize the classroom experience? If I may, I challenge educators to try wearing earplugs for a day or even better, see if you can beat my record of four days. Go on. Try it. I challenge you.

Yes, it has been a rude awakening but one which charges me to advocate better, to think about their ability to learn and the time of day it is, to constantly say "What if they had normal hearing, how much better would they perform?", and to enable them to take responsibility for the skills they need to grow to their fullest potential and become their own best advocate. My ultimate challenge is one I will not forget in the near future and if I do, I will try to beat my own record. (This could almost be a new reality show! Just kidding.)

Thanks for listening.

Colleen J. Walsh completed a Bachelor of Education (Elementary) from Memorial University of Newfoundland in 1989 and a Masters Degree in Deaf Education from Universite de Moncton in conjunction with APSEA-RCHH, in Amherst, Nova Scotia in 1993. Colleen has been working as an Itinerant Teacher for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for ten years on the Burin Peninsula.

Model Bridges and Robotics

Innovative Applied Science Projects for Your Students?

by DICK MYERS

So what exactly do we mean by a model bridge and how does it fit into a school's curriculum as a science project?

The MUN Engineering Students Model Bridge Building Competition is designed for junior high school students in Newfoundland and Labrador and these students have been building model bridges from Popsicle sticks and glue since the early 1990's. And they have been winning prizes for themselves and for their schools.

The Bridge Competition is part of National Engineering and Geoscience Week (NEGW), a Canada-wide event established in 1992 by the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE) with the following objectives: to increase the public's awareness of professional engineers and geoscientists and what they actually do in their day-to-day jobs; and to attract students to a career in science and engineering.

In Newfoundland and Labrador the following activities are structured for students of all ages:

- A Model Bridge Building Competition for students in grades 7 to 9;
- A Model Radio Building Contest for students in grade 12;
- A Shaving Cream Tower Building Contest for students ages 6 to 10 and 11 to 15;
- A Word Puzzle for students in grades 4 to 6;
- A Poster Contest for students in grades K to 3.

In conjunction with these activities we hold display days at malls in the larger centers across the province, where local engineering firms display their abilities and locally designed technology(s). The Model Bridge Building Competition and the Shaving Cream Tower Building Contest are normally held during a mall day. Students bring their pre-constructed model bridges to the mall location to have it tested and receive a mark for their efforts.

The general public, of all ages, are invited to visit our displays, on one of the Saturdays of the week, and watch the ever exciting testing of the model bridges. During the day, prizes are handed out for those of all ages who can accurately answer skill-testing questions concerning engineering and geoscience. Younger students can also try their expertise in building the tallest free standing shaving cream tower.

Model bridge building is a popular event for junior high school students with certain schools entering as many as 100 bridges each. Organizing the

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construction of the bridges in each school is normally undertaken by the science teacher in the particular school, with assistance from the provincial NEGW organizing committee and the local area engineering/geoscientist representative.

Model bridges can be used by teachers as a science project, and students can enter the competition individually or as a team of two students (or more if they like), and do not necessarily have to enter through their school or teacher. The model bridge project matches the curriculum outcomes for the Structure and Design component of the grade 7 curriculum as well as other career outcomes throughout the science curriculum, and it is well suited as a science project in both grades 8 and 9.

Only one bridge is accepted per student, but we will accept any number of bridges from any junior high school students (grades 7 to 9) across the province and will test **all** bridges against our published rules (available anytime on PEGNL's website). We have had up to 140 bridges from one school. Bridges that are judged to not meet the competition rules will be graded and tested but will not be eligible for prizes.

To assist teachers with a grade for the construction of the bridges as part of the course evaluation, the NEGW Committee has a panel of judges, current practicing civil engineers, who judge the construction aspect of the bridge for its unique design and quality of construction. This mark combined with the results of the testing of the bridge in our test frame, will be published on each competition area basis.

Last year Bridge Competitions were held in St. John's, Carbonear, Clarenville, Gander, Grand Falls -Windsor, Corner Brook, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and Labrador City/Wabush.

The NEGW Committee provides the testing equipment at the mall day and engineering students from MUN's Faculty of Engineering assist with actual testing of each bridge (in St. John's mainly). The bridges are placed in a test frame and a load is applied until the bridge fails. Results are entered into our computer program and when all students' marks are verified correct and a winner confirmed, the marks are posted on the PEGNL website and passed on to teachers. Please note we do break apart these bridges; some into several pieces, so bridges are not normally returned in the condition they were when entered into the competition.

Bridges are constructed using only popsicle sticks and white glue, and you can't help but be impressed by the ingenuity, variety and quality of the bridges that we receive each year. One dedicated student, Ashley Tucker, designed a model bridge that withstood the heaviest load for the province in the 2004 Competition. It withstood a load of 1,362.5 kg. That's over one ton of weight, for a structure that weighed only in the range of one kilogram. Pictures of bridges from previous years can be seen on the PEGNL website.

For all this bridge building effort there are prizes awarded to both the student and the school (prizes are also awarded for all other contests). For example, the student or team that receives the best mark in each Competition across the province will receive a cheque for $100. For the overall provincial Bridge Competition winner there is a prize for the school as well as the student.

Of particular interest during our mall day at the Village Shopping Center in St. John's last year was the Junior High School robotics demonstration. Students from several intermediate schools in the Eastern School District were able to program the movements of a Lego vehicle, wireless from a laptop computer, to carry out a variety of tasks automatically. The vehicles were constructed from a Lego Mindstorm Kit and what was amazing was the ease and confidence with which these students manipulated the technology and the fun they were having in the process. It was clear from the keen interest and enthusiasm on the faces of these students that their future was in engineering.

This robotics competition was first held in 2002 at Brother Rice Junior High in St. John's and was first brought to Canada in 2002 by teachers with the Avalon East School District and the Marine Institute of Memorial University. It was adopted from the FIRST Lego League (www.firstlegoleague.org) competitions, started in the USA in 1998, and which has expanded to include over 45,000 students in 2004. Organizers had expected over 20 teams to participate in two tournaments on December 4 in Mount Pearl and December 11 in Harbour Grace. This is a dramatic increase from the seven schools that participated in 2002.

Another robotics event that local high school students participate in is the Underwater Robotics Competition organized by the Marine Advanced Education Center (MATE), Monterey, California (www.marinetech.org). Local teams first participated in the International Underwater Robotics Competition at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 2003 and at the University of California at Santa Barbara in 2004. The team builds a tether-controlled underwater robot (called a "ROV" for Remotely Operated Vehicle) that successfully completes tasks prescribed by the competition conveners. In 2004, the students from the Avalon East School District built a ROV to complete seven separate pre-required competition tasks in a 16" x 14" x 12" robot frame. In both years they were awarded Silver medals in this international competition, competing against strong fields of 24

large, well-funded private schools in the United States and Canada and some university and college teams. For 2005, a team of about 35 students is preparing another ROV – (reportedly "even better than the last") to compete in the 3rd annual International ROV Competition, this year being held at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. All Eastern School District students are eligible to apply for participation on this large team of budding engineers and scientists.

Local professional engineer mentors assist the students with the design and construction of their robots. For more information concerning the ROV Underwater Robotics Competitions please contact science and technology teacher Clar Button at O'Donel High School in Mount Pearl, Tel: 709-364 5305 or E-mail: cbutton@cdli.ca.

The Cardboard Boat race is another exciting event. Teams from different high schools design and build a boat from cardboard and actually race it in an indoor swimming pool to determine a winner for this very exciting and "wet" competition, with prizes awarded to the team with the best overall mark. If you have a swimming pool near you and several level 1, 2 and 3 students who are interested in designing, building and testing a boat made from cardboard and Lepage's glue… all in the same day, then call Brian Penney at the Newfoundland Science Center at 709-754 6197, E-mail: bpenney@nsc.nf.net for contest details. Mini competitions are held in certain individual schools to determine school representatives that attend the Science Center's Competition during NEGW.

National Engineering and Geoscience Week is sponsored by the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers, provincial and territorial Engineering and Geoscientists' Associations, and supported by the various industry sectors, engineering firms, engineers and geoscientists throughout the ten Provinces and three Territories.

The 14th annual National Engineering and Geoscience Week will be held during the week of February 26 to March 6, 2005.

In Newfoundland and Labrador NEGW events are organized with the assistance of volunteer engineers from across the province. For additional information concerning NEGW and how you can participate in events in your area, please contact Joan at the PEGNL office: (709) 753-7714, Fax (709) 753-6131, or E-mail: jfillier@pegnl.ca, or visit the PEGNL website at www.pegnl.ca.

Dick Myers is a member of the 2005 National Engineering and Geoscience Week Committee.

Improving French Second Language Education Through Effective Partnerships

by VALERIE PIKE & NICOLE THIBAULT

The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) is a professional association formed in 1970. Today, we have more than 3,000 members in every province and territory. We are committed to advancing second language teaching and learning throughout Canada by providing opportunities for professional development, encouraging research, and facilitating the sharing of information and the exchange of ideas among second language educators. We are dedicated to cooperating with partner organizations to provide a cohesive voice and effective action on second language issues.

Among the large-scale French second language (FSL) projects CASLT has coordinated are the *National Core French Study* (1990) which proposed a different approach to Core French curriculum and new teaching strategies, and the *Pan-Canadian Formative Assessment Project* (1998) which elaborated a series of model evaluation instruments to support student communicative skills.

During the past year, CASLT has actively participated in the national response endorsing the federal government's *Action Plan for Official Languages*. Members of the CASLT Board and staff attended the preliminary meeting and the symposium on official languages hosted by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in March 2004, as well as the provincial and national consultations organized by Canadian Parents for French to follow up on the symposium. CASLT also undertook three projects of its own with a view to raising the profile of French in Canadian schools and motivating students to continue their study of French to high school graduation – an investigation of the status of core French teachers and their programs; a study of the feasibility of national proficiency testing; and an exploration of student recognition incentives.

The CASLT is calling for the revitalization of Core French programs through changes that focus on high school interest topics and oral communication skills. This statement came in response to the release of the Canadian Parents for French 2004 *Annual State of French Second Language Report* (November 2004). The CPF Report states that the federal government's action plan to double the number of bilingual high school graduates within a decade is doomed to failure unless there is a major overhaul of French classes in schools.

More than 85% of French second language students are enrolled in Core French while only 16.5% of high school students complete their French graduation requirements.

"Student retention and success in French as a second language will only improve with the development of alternative and innovative teaching practices and programs," states Susan Forward, CASLT Spokesperson and Vice Principal at Brother Rice Junior High School in St. John's. "Newfoundland has taken the initiative in piloting programs such as Intensive French. This program increases the proficiency expectations that exist in most Core French courses. Implementing a new pilot course at Grade 10 using a student-centered approach with practical units that focus on French for work or travel is another initiative."

In addition, the Canadian Parents for French report raises the issue of the need to improve working conditions for French teachers. The CASLT supports developments that could include a teacher competence profile that outlines minimum training requirements, language proficiency and competency to help identify areas where support can be provided for teachers of Core French, including expanded bursaries for language upgrading opportunities.

"We appreciate the acknowledgement of the work of Canadian French educators in the development of alternate Core French models identified in the CPF Report," affirms Forward, "and CASLT remains dedicated to working with our partners to better provide a cohesive voice on second language issues across Canada."

Valerie Pike is the CASLT National Council Representative for Newfoundland and Labrador and Nicole Thibault is the CASLT Executive Director. For more information on the CASLT and its initiatives please visit the Association website at www.caslt.org or contact Valerie Pike at valeriepike@esdnl.ca. Membership is open to all teachers of French – Core, Intensive and Immersion.

Virtual Teacher Centre Renews Its Site

by ALEX HICKEY

To own a bit of ground, to scratch it with a hoe, to plant seeds and watch their renewal of life – this is the commonest delight of the race, the most satisfactory thing one can do.

— Charles Dudley Warner (1829 - 1900)

Warner wasn't thinking of the opportunities that modern technologies have afforded us when he made the above observation. Yet, at a time in history when we are faced with innovations of enormous magnitude such as the Internet, his words ring true. As we explore the potential for the use of the Internet to improve our personal and professional lives we are indeed planting seeds that we hope will generate anew, bring about a sense of renewal and lead to even greater achievements. When that planting works, it is one of the most satisfactory things.

"On any given day in any given school there is a teacher in need of some type of professional support – whether that is information on a particular learning strategy, a learning disability, the use of technology, or information around a topic of recent research."

The Virtual Teacher Centre (VTC) has recently launched a newly organized and re-developed site for educators of this Province. During the spring of 2004, North Atlantic Telelearning Associates conducted an extensive evaluation of the VTC. Through a series of interviews and surveys the report generated concrete guidance from users as to how they wanted the site to address their needs. The new site has been online since mid-December. You may visit the site at www.virtualteachercentre.ca and download the Evaluation Report from the opening page.

On any given day in any given school there is a teacher in need of some type of professional support – whether that is information on a particular learning strategy, a learning disability, the use of technology, or information around a topic of recent research. Most of these fall within the "informal" learning needs of that teacher. He/she desires the new knowledge now and without having to go through the hurdles of formal institutions and regulations. The VTC is designed to meet those needs. It offers access to current research, journal articles and websites containing professional resources. In short, it provides access to the professional seeds that keep our profession current and constantly in a state of renewal.

The VTC has just added 40 online modules for teachers. Twenty of those are in the area of Information and Communication Technology while the other 20 address Teaching and Learning – ten French and ten English. These modules are free to teachers. Each school district has been given a license to permit its teachers to access the modules. You will receive notification of that code from your district office in the near future. An overview of the modules can be seen at the VTC.

Other features of the site include access to Department of Education supports for school programs and partnership initiatives with CDLI, Memorial and School Districts. This component of the site will grow over time. Check out the new site and let us know how you feel about it. E-mail me at ahickey@nlta.nl.ca.

Alex Hickey is Coordinator of the Virtual Teacher Centre.

Calendar

SHARING OUR CULTURES/
À LA DÉCOUVERTE DE NOS CULTURES
March 20-22, 2005
Delta Hotel, St. John's. This is a unique opportunity for K-12 teachers and their students to experience a bilingual, interactive, curriculum-relevant, and hands-on approach to learning about diverse cultures. The Fair showcases 25+ countries and 20+ exhibits by government and community organizations. Admission is free but space is limited. For more information contact Lloydetta Quaicoe, Tel: 709-727-2372 or lquaice@nl.rogers.com.

2005 NATIONAL COUNSELLING CONFERENCE
May 24-27, 2005
St. John's. The Newfoundland and Labrador Counsellors' and Psychologists' Association (NLCPA) is co-hosting with the Canadian Counselling Association (CCA) the 2005 National Counselling Conference. The conference promises to be three days of interesting speakers, intensive professional development and Newfoundland hospitality. For more information check out the conference website at www.ccacc2005.ca or contact conference co-chairs Chris Cooper at ccooper@nf.sympatico.ca or Alana Walsh-Giovannini at alanag57@stemnet.ca.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS CONFERENCE
May 25-26, 2005
College of the North Atlantic, Stephenville. For information contact Michael Murrin, Tel: 709-646-2822; Fax: 709-646-5263; mike.murrin@wnlsd.ca.

Dates to Remember

February 2005

Feb 1	**Deadline:** Applications for Educational Leave – teachers must make prior application to school board
Feb 8	Election of NLTA President and Vice-President
Feb 14	Janeway Day in the Schools
Feb 17	NLTA Executive Meeting
Feb 18-19	Joint Council Meeting

March 2005

Mar 6-12	Education Week
Mar 17	**Deadline:** Professional Development Fund applications
Mar 29-31	Biennial General Meeting
Mar 31	**Board Deadline:** Notice for retirement at end of school year
Mar 31	**Deadline for Applications (on or before March 31):** Centennial Study Award; International Conference Presenters Program

April 2005

Apr 1	**Deadline:** Johnson Bursary Applications
Apr 15	**Deadline:** Notice of postponement of Deferred Salary Leave or withdrawal from DSLP
Apr 30	**Deadline:** Deferred Salary Leave Applications
Apr 30	**Deadline:** Year-end resignation from contract

May 2005

May 7	**Deadline:** Notification by Board of layoff
May 8-14	Branch Election Week
May 19	**Deadline:** Professional Development Fund applications
May 27-28	NLTA Executive Meeting

FEBRUARY 14, 2005

Janeway Day

An opportunity to teach children about the true value of helping others.

Every year, Janeway Day in the schools provides an opportunity for children in this province to help other children. In fact, since 1986, students and teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador have donated more than $700,000 to the Janeway. That's something for us to be proud of!

Make sure you participate in Janeway Day 2005; here's how:

BEFORE FEBRUARY 14TH...

- Announce the project and explain what's involved.
- If possible spend some time discussing the Janeway Hospital with your class or have a student who has been a patient at the hospital tell classmates about the experience.

ON FEBRUARY 14TH...

- Ask students (and teachers) to forego the equivalent of recess monies for this one day. (That's their donation to the Janeway.)

Janeway Day in the Schools is the only fundraising effort sponsored by the NLTA.